HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

ACVA • NUMBER 092 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Chair

Mr. Neil Ellis

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Thursday, June 14, 2018

● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.)): I call to order meeting 92 of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is the study of needs and issues specific to indigenous veterans. This is the last meeting of the session, so I guess I'll now warn everybody that we won't be here next week. We will get things wrapped up today and hopefully have a great holiday or great work in our riding.

In this first panel we welcome, from the Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans Council, Brian Black, chair and vice-president, and Shelly Claus, women's representative. Good morning.

From the Unified Veterans of Manitoba, we have Randi Gage, chair. Ms. Gage is a Vietnam-era veteran who was an armour supply specialist in the United States Army. Ms. Gage has been a constant advocate for the rights and health of aboriginal veterans and all veterans, in an effort to ensure they receive the supports they deserve. In the 1990s, she worked tirelessly to designate a special day of recognition for aboriginal veterans. On November 8, 1993, the first Aboriginal Veterans Day took place across Canada. In 1994, the day was officially recognized by the Government of Manitoba.

We will start this morning with 10 minutes from each of our guests. Then we will go into questioning.

We will start with Ms. Gage.

Ms. Randi Gage (Chair, Unified Veterans of Manitoba): Thank you. You took away all the things I had to say. Somebody did their research.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Randi Gage: I have to warn you in advance that I'm a crier, so that's a lesson to begin with.

[*Witness speaks in Ojibwa*]

Does everybody know what I just told you?

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): You said, "Good morning"—

Ms. Randi Gage: Okay.

Mr. Bob Bratina: —and that you're glad to be here.

Ms. Randi Gage: No.

Can anyone translate or interpret what I just said?

Mr. Bob Bratina: Say it again.

Ms. Randi Gage: And again and again. I will do that in a second.

This is an example of one of the huge issues that aboriginal and Métis veterans have faced from day one. I just told you who I am, what my family's position within my community is—was, I don't know what it is today—what my job is seen to be, and where I come from. That was in 11 words or less.

What I said was, "Hello, greetings, good morning"—however you want to do it. Some people say that's really lousy French, but it's not; it's Ojibwa. My name is Eagle Woman. I am of the Loon Clan. I am a warrior woman. My clan is the speaker clan for the people. We have two clans, the White Crane Clan and the Loon Clan, which are the two political clans, so to speak. White Crane are you guys. You're the White Cranes. You go out there and do all the fluffing and folding and all that. The Loon Clan are the speakers for the people. They come and say, "He won't listen to me." Then I go and say, "Now listen here."

That is the start of the problems and confusion that have always faced our people.

Now I'm not going to tell you the usual stories that I'm sure you've heard a million times. For those in French, I apologize, but my French is limited to *oui* and "escargot", and none of those end up in this.

I will read you a little bit of a statement that I want to say to you.

It's the paradox of being a female aboriginal soldier—a huge paradox—and the things that are challenging to a woman going into the military. As aboriginal children, we're free to learn from our mother the Earth and the things that she provides for us. Sure, we're guided to the dangers and things that go on out there that are going to hurt us, but overall we run free—at least I did. I was kind of a wild child.

The rules and regulations that we had were very few. If somebody said your proper name, it was "oh", and if they snapped their fingers, you stopped immediately. If they said, "drop", you dropped immediately. You didn't ask; you got down. You knew you were safe. You would say, "Dad, what was that about?" You didn't ask before. You listened. You had rules.

As an aboriginal female, we were taught from a young age about our bodies and what to do with them and what not to do with them. It was not like today. We were taught what it was for and what was expected of us to do. We were respected for the gift that the Creator gave us, to be like our mother the Earth and to bring life. We were seen as gentle and strong creatures, and the protectors of life. We learned how precious our monthly—although annoying—visitor was, as it was the reason that we were here, to bring new life into the world. See? I told you. I'm a crier.

For me, deciding to become a soldier was easy, because I had always wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps. My plan, like all of us, was to graduate from high school, get a degree in nursing, join the army, and become jump qualified to become a flying nurse. Well, it didn't quite work out that way. I graduated. I went into nursing and was at the point where we selected our specialties. I had one that I wanted. I didn't get it, because the instructor's niece was in the class and she got it. I got mad and I walked out.

I went across the street to the Marine recruiter, but he was rude, so I left. I went to the air force and didn't like the uniforms. I ended up at the army recruiter, who just happened to be giving the entrance exam at that time, so I took the entrance exam. I passed it, missing one question. To this day, it bugs me that I missed that question. I knew the answer, but I gave the civilian definition.

Two weeks later, I was leaving my safe little community in northern Michigan to go to Detroit city. I was a little country bumpkin girl going to the big city of Detroit, where I remember walking across town, down back alleys, at 3 a.m. to the hotel. Yes, I was not the brightest bulb back then.

As I got into all of this—and really, before even entering into the service—I knew that there were rules and regulations, commands, and so on, but I didn't anticipate the abuse. Never did I anticipate the abuse.

I had long, dark hair that was cut off, because only Hawaiian natives could have their long hair. We poor Ojibwas were shorn like sheep. I have a picture to prove it. We were poked with needles, we were prodded. The abusive yelling in our faces was just unbelievable. Instead of giving a command, they.... You got spittle all over yourself. And the starched uniforms.... As kids we didn't wear clothes—shoes, maybe, but clothes were optional. Then you go into these uniforms, and they had to be such and they had to be so, and you had to have your bed made with no wrinkles—flip a quarter and make it pop.

This was all strange. I know, although not having experienced the Canadian Forces, that it's pretty much the same. There are rules and regulations and guys screaming. I believe they're called master sergeants. They just really like to scream at you. It's a very foreign world for an aboriginal person when you go into this all of a sudden.

During basic training and advanced training, you're taught what your job will be. Everyone is trained to shoot and to stab. For six, eight, 10, 12 weeks, your civilian self is removed and your military self is born. You have to learn a new language. You have to learn a walk. You have to learn to yield to the demands and the commands. You learn to sleep standing up, which I have done many times. You learn just how many potatoes are in a 45-kilogram bag, which I've seen many times.

You learn how to follow the most unreasonable of orders and you develop a thick callus on your tongue from biting it to keep from asking why or telling an officer just how wrong they are. The happy, innocent, carefree civilian who joined with the dreams of glory is replaced with a hardened military attitude of survival, with no glimmer of glory. You forget who you were and what your dreams had been, because you have now been brainwashed and have become a well-trained military killing machine.

Remember, in my civilian life I was an aboriginal woman who was raised to be a giver of life. I am now a killer of life, and I am expected to do this duty unflinchingly when I am told to pull that trigger.

I have to say that over the years, there are many wonderful things that you experience, as well as the truly heart-wrenching things that you must do or witness. It isn't all bad. You learn to accept the bad things and move on in your military self. By now, you have disconnected with the civilian female you were those 18 years before you entered basic. You can take a gun apart and reassemble it in the allotted time. I could drive just about anything they threw me in, except a tank—I never did figure those things out.

You learn to deal with your female visitor, surrounded by a group of men. You are afforded no privacy at that time, as you are a soldier, not a woman. You are made the brunt of jokes, and sometimes not even given a private place to make the needed item change. I sit here today in front of you and I say that this is still happening to today's Canadian Forces soldiers. I have been told time and time again by women who have come back.

When it's discharge time, there are no six, eight, 10, or 12 weeks to debrief and put back on your civilian self. It's a discharge: "Bye, see you later." You are given a ticket home, a few dollars, and a handshake. Nope, nothing. "Good luck. Bye. Call if you need us."

But you know what? You forget to give us a phone number that works. We're shown the gate and left to assess what life has for us, and more importantly, what life doesn't have for us.

● (1110)

Sure, you're excited to leave the chaos and you think things will be the same as when you left, but they aren't. The world isn't and you aren't, so you go into a type of shock, and that takes a few weeks or even years to come out of.

Support is hard to find, if it exists; and if it does, it is not culturally appropriate—and I emphasize that—whether you are first nation, Métis, or Inuit, or even close to anything traditional in scope. Those of the group who are standing in front of you or sitting in a chair next to you are book-taught, and even worse, their very appearance causes trauma. Ask me about that afterwards.

For those who served in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, there was little or no support. Being an aboriginal soldier, there was even less, and for aboriginal female soldiers, there was even less than that. Many tried to drown the dogs of war in booze; some chose drugs, and some did their best to try to act normal in what was a non-normal world. Today's aboriginal soldiers face many of these same issues, because there are no culturally appropriate government-approved support services to be found.

You see, in your infinite wisdom of governing, you refuse to allow anyone who does not have a piece of paper from one of your recognized institutions to do support work. Anyone who is out there to help the soldiers must meet your standards, even if they have no idea what they are talking about when it comes to aboriginal spirituality and tradition, be it first nation, Métis, or Inuit.

How did I leave the dogs behind? To tell you the truth, I haven't totally. I've trained them. I tell them to go away and leave me alone. However, I did go to a lot of non-approved support that knew and respected my culture and traditions. I drove hundreds of miles to powwows, sweat lodges, and ceremonies until I could see myself once again as a civilian and not dive for cover at July 1 fireworks or the slamming of a door. I worked hard and took hold of my life, which is now nearing the twilight years, but don't let that fool you: there is a lot of fight left.

I hope that this small look through the eyes of a female aboriginal soldier will open your eyes and your minds to the unique needs of not only the aboriginal soldier, but to the very unique needs and issues of female soldiers, female aboriginal soldiers in particular.

Now this is where I'm going to cry. Thank you.

In closing, seeing that this current government is advocating reconciliation with aboriginal peoples, I would ask that this year they officially recognize November 8 as Aboriginal Veterans Day.

This year in Winnipeg, the only city in Canada to officially recognize November 8 as Aboriginal Veterans Day, we will have a 25th anniversary celebration. Next year, the province of Manitoba, the only province in Canada to recognize November 8 as Aboriginal Veterans Day, will celebrate the 25th anniversary.

Two years ago, Veterans Affairs Canada recognized November 8 as Aboriginal Veterans Day by publishing it on their website. Isn't it time for the full Canadian government to officially recognize this day?

Thank you.

● (1115)

The Chair: Thank you.

Please go ahead, Mr. Black.

Mr. Brian Black (Chair and Vice-President, Métis Nation of Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members, guests, and friends, it's a great honour to be here before you to discuss Métis veterans and their issues.

Métis peoples have been fighting battles for Canada since the War of 1812, and then again in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan.

I've been watching and listening to your committee meetings on this study on indigenous veterans, and I'm going to try not to repeat some of the things that have already been stated, so bear with me if I do.

June has seen a bunch of armed forces appreciation days. June 21 is national aboriginal day. June is PTSD awareness month. The relevance of this study in this month is not lost on us. We welcome the opportunity to express our feelings and take your questions.

I am the chairperson for the Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans' Council. I served in the Canadian Armed Forces in the 1990s. I participated in the first Gulf War, and again as a UN peacekeeper during the Haiti conflict. Not only did I take the oath to serve my country, but twice I put my life on the line in these official conflicts. I say this not for thanks or admiration, but for your understanding that I speak from experience and first-hand knowledge.

Our Métis veterans' council has six members. We're spread throughout the province, from Windsor to Trenton, from Toronto up to north of Midland. You can understand that sometimes just getting our council together is pretty tough.

The challenges that the Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans' Council faces are many. Ontario is a very big province, and our veterans are scattered throughout it. The obvious first problem is geography. Technology is great and it gets us connected, but there are veterans who don't want technology, and they live up in remote areas.

Being Métis, our peoples do not have reserves to live on, so there is generally no gathering place readily available for our veterans. We do have community offices throughout the province, but their limited funds are for outreach or to help our veterans as needed in those communities.

Last year our council did some fundraising, and we brought veterans and our youth to Ottawa for the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge. Our youth were brought as young eyes to see experiences through the veterans' eyes. Each youth was tasked to talk to the veterans throughout the weekend and write a journal of their experience. Their journal entries are going to be placed into our second book, which is coming out in the near future. I have given each of you in the committee a copy of our first book. I'm sorry that there is no French translation for it.

Last summer, our Métis youth council asked our veterans' council to participate in facilitating leadership workshops at their national youth meeting. Our youth are important to us; we see them as being very valuable. They see our importance to them in their journey also.

Last year we heard that there was going to be a reconciliation for Métis World War II veterans. I'll ask what is going on with that. We heard this announcement, and then we heard nothing—crickets. Our World War II veterans are not getting any younger. What are we waiting for?

I understand there may have been some talks with Veterans Affairs and our Métis National Council, but nothing from this has been translated down to the Métis provincial council, veteran councils, or committees. This matter needs a second engagement and discussion with the provincial Métis veteran councils and committees—not the national council, which does not know all the needs of our veterans.

This past winter I attended a milestone birthday for one of our World War II veterans here in Ontario. He turned 105 years old, god bless his heart.

I want to give you some information that will help you identify with veteran issues. Some of these are not solely Métis issues, but they are systemic for veterans across the spectrum.

When a citizen takes his oath to serve this great country of ours, most believe that there is no expiry date on that oath. From the point of taking that oath, you're embedded with others. In basic training you are put to do many tasks at the same time. You are trained to change your mind into thinking that you can't do it all yourself. You have to rely on your comrades to pull together for better results and successes. You line up for meals together, take courses together, shower together, clean the floors together.

● (1120)

There's no personal space. You're always with somebody else. After basic training, this is relaxed a little bit, but the theories are all still the same. There's always support and someone there with you.

After the years of living like this, when a person takes his or her release, then they're alone. This is where the mind can get idle, and good things do not come of that. I by no means am an expert on PTSD, depression, or any other intellectual handicap, but what I do know is if one of my comrades was hurting and I could get to them, I could listen to them, I could support them, I could flesh it out and help them get the support that they need. Being alone is a recipe for disaster.

When we Métis come home, we not only come home alone, we're also secluded and alone. There are communities out there that can help most of the veterans, but most veterans won't open up to non-veterans who cannot relate or speak to their experiences. Veteran-to-veteran intervention is the best way to help these situations.

There is a stigma out there that causes us not to ask for help, so veterans who need the help need to be searched out. They're not going to come to the door asking for help. There's not a single program that's going to help every single vet, and that's why there are so many great programs out there.

I'm going to say something that's going to surprise you: I think Veterans Affairs is doing a good job. I think they're doing a good job with the tools that they've been given. Can they do better? You better believe they should, but I understand that they cannot do everything for everyone. What needs to happen is better partnerships with groups like our veterans council, with the Royal Canadian Legion, the Dignified Veteran Assistance clinic, VETS Canada, AVA. These are all groups that work on the front lines looking after the vets. They're doing the work that Veterans Affairs is unable to do, with no support and very little funding, if any.

As I stated earlier, we took this oath with the belief that there's no expiry date. We serve until we can serve no more. Men and women —yes, don't forget the support and the contributions our fighting women have made in this service—write a blank cheque to serve our country, but when we get cut short and we're back home battling our inner and outward demons, we've been told that we're asking for too much. In plain military terms, that's "unsat".

We acknowledge the changes that Veterans Affairs has made, that they're not sitting idle and that they're trying to make improvements, but they have a long way to go. Communication needs to improve. Technology is great, social media is great, but face-to-face, peer-to-peer contact is how it's going to happen.

A few weeks ago, you had Dr. Scott Sheffield and Mr. Lafontaine here in front of you. One of the things that really hit home with me that day was when Mr. Lafontaine said that he is full Métis everywhere in his life except with VAC. That should not still be happening.

In closing, I must clarify that I am not a Métis historian or a scholar. I am Métis. I am a Persian Gulf veteran. I'm a Canadian peacekeeping veteran. I work and care for my Métis veteran brothers and sisters.

Meegwetch.

● (1125)

The Chair: We're going to have to start with five-minute rounds, so we'll start with Ms. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much for being here today and for being forthright with us.

We had the opportunity as a committee to recently travel across Canada focusing specifically on listening to aboriginal, first nations, and Métis—not Inuit yet—to hear specifically about your concerns. There are things that are very specifically attached in this area that we need to address.

That said, a lot of what was expressed, and from what you say as well, Mr. Black, is symptomatic of being part of the armed forces. Then there are parts that are connected to the lack of care specifically for the Métis community. We were up in Beauval, Saskatchewan, in a Métis town. They had a lot of very good things to say that were very similar to what you said.

In regard to Aboriginal Veterans Day, November 8, we heard a different perspective. They valued it, but they want to be as valued on November 11. Can you speak to that a little bit, either of you, Ms. Gage or Mr. Black?

Ms. Randi Gage: Seeing that I am the founder of that day, sure, I could speak to it.

If you went into your archives and found these documents, you would know about it. Back in 1992 we were gathered here on the Hill to establish the National Aboriginal Veterans Association—the good one, not the current one. One of the things that came out of that meeting with veterans from all across Canada was that they wanted a day when they could keep their history in their community. As veterans, we'll tell you that the one place we want to be on November 11 is with our comrades. Whether it's in Winnipeg or whether it's here at the cenotaph, we want to be with everybody.

We had this discussion, and June 21 came up. They said, "No, that's National Indigenous Peoples Day. We want our day."

We went through a bunch of stuff. We looked at November 8 because of the number, 8. What they came up with was that it was a good time to be able to get their uniforms out and get them dry cleaned, to polish up everything that needed to be polished up, to get their feet working in the right direction as far as marching and remembering things was concerned, and to meet with their community—be within their community, save their history there, be with their children and grandchildren, share what was happening. They figured that gave them enough time to get all spruced up and ready to go wherever they had to go on November 11.

That is why that day was put into play. It has now gone all the way across. People don't understand it because nobody asked the question. I mean, the Legion went bonkers on it until I sat down and told them the reason. It's taking nothing away from November 11.

● (1130)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: If I may, Ms. Gage, I think we're heading in a direction that I hadn't intended. It's not seen as a competition or not understanding the value of it. This was within the Métis community that we were hearing this.

Ms. Randi Gage: Yes, I understand. That's what I'm saying.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay.

Ms. Randi Gage: Developing this day was not to, in any way whatsoever, take anything away. It was to enhance the fact that our communities were losing what an aboriginal veteran was. They were losing their veterans. They're dying. They're gone.

I noticed in your invitation that you had no recognition of World War I: wrong. Ask me about that.

This was an enhancement so that they could keep that knowledge within their community and share it.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Wonderful. Thank you.

Ms. Randi Gage: Do you have anything else?

Mr. Brian Black: No. I think you hit the point right on.

We wanted a day to recognize our separate contributions. We also wanted to keep it separate from the November 11 ceremony, because we want to be with all our comrades. There are great stories out there from back in World War I and World War II. Indigenous people enlisted, and all of a sudden they had a good job and three meals. They were treated just like one of the normal people; they were contributing and everyone was working together. There was no separation. When they came home, that's when that disconnect happened. This is celebrating both.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I appreciate that. We did hear from associations across the country that it was important to celebrate in your communities and then to be available and be part of the celebrating on Remembrance Day as well. I just wanted that on the record today.

Ms. Randi Gage: I have something here for you too.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Wonderful.

The Chair: We'll get to that later. Thank you.

Mr. Fraser, you have five minutes.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all very much for joining us. I appreciated the presentations.

I want to start with you, Ms. Gage. You talked about non-approved support services. Some of those were helpful to you in transitioning to civilian life. You mentioned powwows and sweat lodges. So far in this study we've heard about some of that work that goes on with indigenous veterans and how helpful it can be.

First, just so we're clear, what do you mean by "non-approved"? Also, what do you think could be done to better help build those partnerships?

Ms. Randi Gage: You came to me with a loaded question there.

"Non-approved" means that, from what I have experienced with the people I work with who have PTSD—and that's another topic too, PTSD and vicarious trauma; those things need to be dealt with. Those people can't decide to go to an aboriginal elder and have any type of financial support, shall we say, to be able to go from point A to point B to see this individual. I'll give you an example.

It's a husband and wife; both served in Afghanistan; both served numerous tours; both are retired from the Canadian Forces. Both of them suffer from PTSD. They both went to 17 Wing because in Winnipeg, that's where veterans have to go to get examined or whatever.

They were directed to go and see "approved" individuals. They went to Deer Lodge Centre for a sharing circle or support circle or whatever they're calling their things. When they went in, first of all, they were met by—and I do apologize; I am not racist to anyone; just understand where I'm coming from with this—a gentleman wearing a turban. Number one, that was traumatic, because they had been in Afghanistan, and who had been in their sights but people wearing turbans? Second, when they sat down in the circle to start discussing, she was asked to leave because this was for men with PTSD—not for soldiers with PTSD, but men. She was asked to sit out in the hall while her husband, whom she had served with side by side, was able to take part in this circle. The men didn't want her hearing what they had experienced.

Excuse me? A month ago, she was shooting the same gun that they had. This is very real: the women are not allowed into these circles, and if they are, people hold back.

She wanted to go to, well, me. You can't tell by my blond hair, but I am old. I'm 70 years old, so I've been down the road a bit. I do understand things, I am traditional and I do know my traditions and culture. She wanted to come to me, but that's a two-hour drive from where she's at, and all she asked for was a little gas money to go back and forth. She was told no, because I am not a sanctioned, authorized person; I do not have a piece of paper from the University of Guelph or wherever, so she couldn't come to me.

That has to stop.

● (1135)

Mr. Colin Fraser: Thank you very much for that.

Mr. Black, in the limited time I have left, I wanted to touch on what you had mentioned about the need for building better partnerships. You talked about partnerships between Veterans Affairs, possibly, and your veterans council or the Legion, and I think you had mentioned a couple of other organizations that are really important because those are the resources that we have on the ground, and their coverage is much better than any government department could ever be.

Can you talk a little bit about how that partnership could be fostered and what recommendation you would make to keep those things going with, perhaps, government support?

Mr. Brian Black: Just as you said, they're basically on the front lines. For example, last week VETS Canada was here in Ottawa doing a homeless search, looking for homeless vets, but I got notice of that on Friday. If there was some sort of way that Veterans Affairs could put on their website—for lack of a better word—an events page—

Mr. Colin Fraser: Just on that, who gave you the notice for that?

Mr. Brian Black: I saw it on Facebook.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Okay.

Mr. Brian Black: That way, there could be some notice, and then maybe people could come out to help.

It's the same thing when Veterans Affairs is having some activity. We don't find out until the day after it happened, or people say, "Oh, yes, I was there, and it was great." We don't get advance notice that it's coming. That level of communication, that pre-notice, is the biggest gap that I would see.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Johns is next.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you for your testimony and for being here and, most importantly, for your service.

If you could continue talking about the partnerships, Mr. Black, that would be great. What are the kinds of services that you think you could help deliver on behalf of veterans, being properly resourced from VAC?

Mr. Brian Black: With our personal counsel and for what we do, we don't have the infrastructure to do some of the other jobs that some of these associations do, so we piggyback with them. When they have something, we bring our resources to support and help them out to do what they're going to do. If we knew ahead of time that VETS Canada was going to do a homeless search on the streets of Ottawa, we would contact all our local vets and tell them this is happening and ask if anybody could come out to help.

Again, it goes to communication. It's one of the biggest problems, and you could probably find that hole in just about the whole system. A better line of communication needs to come out. They're using social media a lot better than they used to, and they're communicating a little better, but their outreach still needs to be a little better.

We've been trying to get an outreach with Veterans Affairs on what their commemorative events are coming up. It's taken us a couple of years to finally start to get those notices, but it's like pulling teeth just to find that communication that they're freely giving, that they want to give us, but we don't know who to get it from.

Mr. Gord Johns: On that thread, you've talked about face-to-face, veteran-to-veteran communication being the most important.

● (1140)

Mr. Brian Black: Right.

Mr. Gord Johns: In the United States, I think they have a threshold that 30% of their caseworkers have to be veterans, and I am sure that's not reflected here in Canada, veterans as caseworkers serving veterans. Would that be something you would like to see—the percentage of aboriginal, first nation, Métis, and Inuit veterans who are serving being reflected in VAC caseworkers?

Ms. Gage, I think you talked about being culturally appropriate in that support, that understanding. Would that be something you'd like to see more of?

Mr. Brian Black: Definitely. As I said, there's that stigma out there that veterans aren't going to ask for help. When I am personally in front of one of my comrades and talking to him, I'm going to see in his face that there's something wrong, and then maybe I'll add some other conversation to try to draw him out and see what it is. Depending on who he is, I can say that he needs to go talk to somebody, and he might say maybe or maybe not. No, he needs to go. We can talk directly to that sensitivity level of what we can do to look after our vets. We can support them through it. If they want me to go with them, I'll go with them.

When you get into that level, you need to search out that person who needs that help, and they're not sitting there. Personally, I would go to a Veterans Affairs town hall and sit in the back. I'd walk in, sit in the back, and I'd listen to that and I'd say, "Yes, well, nothing has really changed and nothing is really going to help me", and then I'd walk out the back door.

Ms. Randi Gage: Exactly.

Mr. Brian Black: That discouragement is there unless somebody is there to pull that into them.

Mr. Gord Johns: Ms. Gage, maybe I'll ask you to comment a bit too. You talked about people who aren't sanctioned or authorized, but they are, really. They are culturally sensitive and understanding. Maybe you could speak a little about the need and what VAC can do in terms of making sure we have those resources in place.

Ms. Randi Gage: Well, it's just like the little exa: ., le I gave you about a woman having her period. That, in mainstream society, is nothing. You know it happens, okay, so you go buy your.... But within our culture, it's a big deal, and being able to communicate with a female veteran who can say, "Yes, okay; now, this is how we deal with it...."

It's important to have things that are culturally appropriate, to have a knowledge of tradition that is not out of a book—because you can't get it out of a book—and have a person or a group of people who can talk to the veteran, be they female or male, who understands the little innuendos or the...idiosyncrasies, I guess, of things. Understand that you took me from being an aboriginal woman who was going to get married, have kids, be a grandma, and yada, yada, yada, and put a gun in my hand to become a killer, even though I was trained to shoot a gun from the time I was three or four years old, but that was for survival to eat, not to take him out, the child of another woman, and understand that when you say that to—excuse me, world—a mainstream, book-trained psychologist, psychiatrist, or whatever, you become a narcissistic person.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lambropoulos is next.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you for being here with us to share your experiences and to help us improve the way things are done.

Mr. Black, you said that a previous witness—I believe it was a previous witness, because I've heard it before—had mentioned that he considers himself Métis in all walks of life, except at VAC. I was wondering if you could speak a bit more as to why that is. What is the distinction there? Why would being a Métis be a disadvantage for him?

Mr. Brian Black: I'm not sure. He didn't really elaborate on that. What I got from his testimony when I was listening to it was that because of his service, he wasn't taking care of himself. He wanted to take care of others. This was just a statement he made. I didn't hear if he elaborated on the specifics, but he did say there were issues within VAC that stopped him and that he got rid of the issues once he said or implied that he wasn't Métis.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Do you know others who have experienced similar issues?

Mr. Brian Black: Not in recent years, no.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: You also mentioned that veterans in general don't feel comfortable opening up to the rest of the population when they haven't necessarily experienced the same things. They haven't killed anybody and haven't done the things they've had to do while on duty.

What do you think the Government of Canada can do to improve this veteran-to-veteran approach?

● (1145)

Mr. Brian Black: Mr. Johns talked about getting more veterans involved as caseworkers who are out in the field, getting them out to identify.... Veterans aren't going to sit in a circle room and express their feelings. There isn't one program that is going to suit all veterans, and that's why there are so many of those groups out there. Definitely the peer-to-peer, veteran-to-veteran approach would get the best results. How to go about that is outside my purview.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Ms. Gage, you are the first female indigenous veteran we have seen. I could be wrong, but I think so. You're the first one who has really expressed yourself—

Ms. Randi Gage: Poor you.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: We've heard from a lot of the males, and they said that when they were actual soldiers, they felt very included. They felt like things were going well for them while they were in the army. You speak of a very different experience, and I'm wondering if that's because you are a woman and because the culture of the armed forces needs to change in order to make women feel like they belong. As a woman who is indigenous as well, you have a completely different experience, and with that upbringing, it could have been an even bigger culture shock for you.

What do you think we can do to improve the situation for women in general and to make it more culturally appropriate? I know we have improved in that sense, and now elders are sometimes brought in to help train people working in the armed forces. What else do you think we could do?

Ms. Randi Gage: There are a million things. The first thing I'd like to put on the table is to caution every single, solitary one of you from the top of Veterans Affairs down to be careful of who you choose as an elder. Make sure they are truly recognized by their people as elders, not by just anybody. That is very important, because there are a lot of instant elders—"Just add money, and I'll be there." That's just a warning.

When I was in the service, it was a little bit different from today because we were two separate services. There was the regular army and there was the Women's Army Corps. That doesn't exist any more. It's all one. As for the camaraderie, when you are a soldier in uniform, you are pretty much accepted until certain little aspects in life cause women to stand out a little bit more. If you have an officer who wants something typed up properly, they're not going over to Doug and ask him to type it. They're going to come over to Randi and ask her. Of course, I'm a secretary, and he may be a business education person. What can I say?

Make sure there is a clear understanding that when you're a soldier, you're a soldier. One of the issues about being a soldier is just that—you are a soldier. You're a comrade. You're the same. When you deploy someone, this is the time that the real differences happen, because a simple little thing.... You just have to look at the deployment. Make sure there are things there for the deployed woman soldier, like privacy to pee: a bucket and a blanket.

The Chair: Mr. Eyolfson, you have four minutes.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Thank you. I'm sharing my time with secretary Romanado, so I'll let you start.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Oh, thank you. *Meegwetch, meegwetch.* It's a real pleasure to meet you both.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the family unit. Both of you have served in the United States Army and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Have you served as well?

Ms. Shelly Claus (Women's Representative, Métis Nation of Ontario): Yes, yes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: *Meegwetch*. I'm sorry that we didn't have a chance to hear from you.

I want to thank you all for your service to your various countries, and of course as Canadians serving in the United States, to both countries.

I wanted to talk a little bit about how we could support the families of indigenous veterans. I think that's really important, because I'm a family member. I have two sons serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, so that's a component that I want to hear about from you, because we've heard that we need to involve the families, especially when one transitions from a very collectivist group to a very individualistic setting. As you said, once you leave, you're on your own.

What could we be doing to help, and what specific needs do indigenous families have to help support their veterans?

● (1150)

Ms. Shelly Claus: Thank you for having me here today. It took a while for me to be recognized as a veteran as I sit in this room with you. I've come across that since I got out of the military after 10 years' service. I was a peacekeeper. I still face that today. I was introduced as a Métis veteran, and I was told, "Oh, they're nothing."

In this day and age, that needs to stop. I'm a proud mother. My son is 26 years old, and he happened to be born on United Nations peacekeeping day. My husband was a peacekeeper at the same time when we were on our tours. I was at the Israeli-Syrian border, the Golan Heights, while the Gulf War happened, so that took on a whole different meaning. I have stories I could tell, but I'm going to keep this short.

I'm a mother. My 10-year military career was fantastic. I chose to be a mother and I chose to get out at that time, not knowing what was going to hit me after the fact. One day you're at work, you've got your boots on, you're at the mess, you're having a beer, you're one of the guys, you're sharing stories, and it's fun. The next day, I'm home with a young baby, in my slippers, no family, nobody to talk to. I didn't know what to do with myself, because I was used to going to work. I didn't know how to be a mom to my first child, and there was no support for me to reach out to. I wasn't military. I was now civilian and I didn't know what to do with myself.

On the Métis side of it, as a Métis veteran, I only found out that I was Métis about 20 years ago. I'm the youngest of nine, and we lived in northern Ontario, but it was hidden from us. We did things that were Métis. Now I realize it. I could snare a rabbit and carry a pellet gun after school to go check my snares. I went moose-calling with my brothers. I still harvest today. I go up to the North Bay area—I'm not giving away the area—and I do harvest, and we are successful every year. I camp and I enjoy our traditional life, but I never grew up with our traditional life, so now that my son is 26, I try to teach him our traditional ways, and I also try to teach them to my nieces and my nephews.

Throughout our own community, not being full first nation myself, I do not go to a sweat lodge. I do not seek out elders to help me in any of my process. I don't have PTSD that I'm aware of, but I try to reach out to our Métis veterans, whether by a phone call or by organizing events in my local area to get the veterans out. I've been on Remembrance Day parades wearing my sash, my beret, and my medals, and it's like, "Are you a veteran? Are you a Métis veteran? Oh, why are you wearing your scarf around your waist?"

I think all we're looking for is to be recognized. Some of the symbols are so easy to recognize, like a blue beret amongst everybody on Remembrance Day. Everybody's proud of their berets.

We have veterans who just won't wear their medals because they can't. Because of their PTSD, from wherever they served, they don't want to be recognized as veterans. When we go into the communities or go into civilian facilities, as I'll call them, and try to explain that to people, they just don't get it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kitchen is next.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here, and thank you for your service.

I could go on for hours, but we're short on time.

Ms. Gage, as part of answering this question, could you maybe give us a little bit of your background as well, and very quickly too? Throughout our travels the last couple of weeks, we came across a lot of veterans who served in the United States. From what you've told us so far, I understand that you were born in Michigan, and I see that connection, but there were a lot more here in Canada who went down to the States, and I'm just wondering if the Métis would have had the same kind of thought process in doing that?

● (1155)

Mr. Brian Black: In the traditional Métis territories, you have territory number three way up north, and then it comes down to around Winnipeg and the Red River. It definitely does go down into the U.S., so I'm sure that did happen, but I don't know any of the specifics off the top of my head. I know for sure it did happen, but to what degree I can't tell you.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: I know some said, "We wanted to join the Marines, and that's the one reason." It was equipment issues or whatever. Would you concur with that?

Ms. Randi Gage: Am I allowed to say the things you're asking me to say without—

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Sure. Yes.

Ms. Randi Gage: Nobody's calling security, right?

Well, to join the U.S. Army, you become a soldier. You become a soldier who picks up a gun and shoots people. You go out there and you kick butt. Remember, the door swung both ways at that time. We had the guys in the States running like crazy to get up here, and the guys up here running like crazy to get down there.

This was very much a country of peacekeepers. This was very much a country of "Yes, dears". Down there it's "Get the hell out of my way. I'm going through." I think for a lot of them who came down to fight—the ones I knew, because there were quite a few where I was working—that was their whole thing. They came down and they wanted to get into the fight.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

We've done previous studies on transition. One of the things we've talked about through that transition is that we spend hundreds of millions of dollars to train soldiers. They serve their time. When they're done, as you said, it's "Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

Ms. Randi Gage: And the wrong phone number....

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Right. We don't take any time to deprogram or to make them civilians again.

We have talked a bit about that with our forces in general, but would you say there's a difference? If someone was to do a program to make soldiers civilians again, would there be a difference in their approach with Métis, with indigenous veterans, or should it be the same type of program?

Ms. Randi Gage: Being a civilian, that's a loaded one. Making a civilian...?

Mr. Brian Black: I think you're asking a bit of a loaded question. I will go right back to the World War II veterans when they left the service. They should not have been treated any differently than any other veteran was treated. You're asking the same thing, and I would say no.

The military family resource centres are starting a great program of that transition, and nobody should be excluded from that.

Ms. Randi Gage: Yes.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: It should be the same, but would you agree it would be something we should be doing?

Ms. Randi Gage: Yes.

Mr. Brian Black: Definitely. The culture should be acknowledged, but it should not be any different for any veteran coming in or out.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Okay.

Ms. Randi Gage: Because it's no different going in.

I know, and I see your doing this. See, this is one of the issues when you bring aboriginal people in to give you the information you need: it's "sst, sst".

Mr. Robert Kitchen: He was looking at me, though.

Ms. Randi Gage: Yeah, well....

Anyway, you need to keep that in mind when you're doing these things. I'm here until four o'clock if anybody wants to continue this discussion.

As to my background, I'm a biomedical electronic engineer who got tired of machines and hospitals and putting up with doctors. I am a certified palliative care specialist who specializes in grief recovery.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Unfortunately, that ends our time for the panel. We will have to recess.

I would like to thank the panel today for everything you do for the men and women who have served and are continually serving. If there's anything you want to add, you could put it in an email to the clerk. I know, Randi, you've sent in a great summary, and that will go in our documents.

We will recess and get our next panel up. Thank you.

● (1155)

(Pause)

● (1205)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

In this second panel we welcome Victor Sanderson, a veteran of Afghanistan. He is coming to us by video conference from Saskatoon.

From the Métis Nation British Columbia, we have Lissa Smith, vice-president and Minister for Veterans, along with Tanya Davoren, director of the ministries of health, sport, and veterans.

Mr. Sanderson will begin for 10 minutes.

Thank you.

Mr. Victor Sanderson (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to thank the grandfathers and the Creator for allowing me to be here today and to have safe travel here.

From the Boer War all the way to World War II, our veterans who have fought with you have really been let down by the government and in turn have let down a lot of our people.

Throughout our time with you and before that, we had a warrior society. The warrior society looked after our people in many ways, and it's being forgotten. A great apology from Canada would be most sufficient to help us move forward as a people. By forgetting our warrior society, we're forgetting ourselves, and when we're forgetting ourselves, we don't know how to go into combat. It's one of the things that we use to move forward as soldiers.

We look toward our grandfathers for direction and for safe passage through these war-torn countries that we went to. When we came back, we had a hard time moving forward because of being put back on a reservation. We had a hard time with the Indian agents. The Indian agents had no direct link with Veterans Affairs Canada. It was a vicious cycle back and forth with them, too—the Indian agents and VAC. The ball kept getting thrown back and forth and there was no movement with our people.

Our World War II veterans started an advocacy group, which is now the Saskatchewan First Nation Veteran Association. I am a member of that association now. It has taken me a long time to get there because of all the feelings I had when I got out of the military. I felt let down and put down. There was the humiliation I went through from putting on a uniform because of the backlash of my people. My people figured that by serving Canada, I would be a traitor to my own people.

In reality, there was a bigger calling inside of me to be a warrior and a soldier for this country. It didn't matter whether it was down in the States or up in Canada. It's because of the Jay Treaty that we have served between these two countries that fulfill Turtle Island. That is what we call home. We have always called this home Turtle Island. It's not Canada and it's not the States.

When you go onto a reservation and you try to seek help from the health services, there is nothing. The health services there are very limited, and there is no help for veterans and such, so they tell us to go back to Veterans Affairs, and Veterans Affairs sends us back to Health Canada. That's still the vicious cycle that we deal with on a daily basis. When we try to get some education going, there is no such thing as education for veterans, as well, because they send us back to you guys. We fight with our traditional chiefs, but they realize that we only have less than 3% across the board and across Canada for education. On that front, Canada needs to pull up its socks and give us more funding for education for funding.

Through the Veterans Affairs association, the quality of life is non-existent. We do not have anything on reserves for help through our own people, as well as through Health Canada. We go through pain and suffering as individuals, dealing with severe chronic pain. That's one thing that I deal with as well, along with post-traumatic stress disorder. When they both kick in, it is a very vicious cycle that I go through. My body and my family pay for it dearly, and a lot of times I disappear in my own mind, but with the love from my wife.... She understands. She got educated on her own, without the help of Veterans Affairs or anything that has support for family issues. It is non-existent within Saskatchewan itself, through Veterans Affairs.

We realize this office just opened. They're probably making some strides to help us, but still there's a long way to go.

● (1210)

The life we have on reserve is very, very poor. A lot of our elder veterans do not have transportation to get anywhere, even to the health clinic. When they get there, they prefer to speak their language. We have four distinct societies here in Saskatchewan. It's very hard for them to actually talk to Veterans Affairs because they prefer their own language. It's the best way they can get their point across, because the broken English they have used throughout their service is no good for them and they prefer their own language. If this government can get on board and try to hire our own people through VAC, through these offices—there are nine offices across this country—we would be able to move forward in a way that we haven't done before. We're not moving anywhere. We're just going in circles. It's a vicious cycle, and we're tired of it. I am tired of it.

I went through a lot of different places across this country. I lived on different reserves. When I first got listed, I was disabled with PTSD and chronic pain. I was in Vancouver. The services there were really good, they were excellent. I was getting help. I was moving forward. I moved home because my dad was ill and I wanted to be with him for the rest of his time here on mother Earth. When I got back here, I had a home visit with one of the elderly ladies from Veterans Affairs. She came out and saw how I was living and everything else. She suggested I go with Health Canada and help myself, because her taxpayer money pays enough for everybody else on this reserve to do such things as that from Health Canada, and we should actually leave Veterans Affairs alone. That really stung me. After that, Veterans Affairs was no longer invited into my home because of all the things they have taken away from me, all the services, all because of racism. It's because I was a native guy living on my reserve. From her point of view, I was benefiting from the taxpayers' dollars, but the taxpayers do not realize that my life is important to my family, as is yours.

A voice: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: We served this country. We sacrificed everything: our lives, our livelihood, and being who we are as a distinct people. When we put on that uniform, we were all green, but I still felt and had racism directed towards me. The word "chief" did not bother me, or "wagon burner", or other such harsh words. I've learned to adapt and overcome all these obstacles presented by racism.

I've had a hard time since I came out of the military, though, because of feeling insecure, inadequate, and ashamed, because my family did not understand who I was or what I'd become. I was more of a robot, you would actually say, because if I was given an order, I'd do it without question, without delay. That's how we were trained, to watch out for each other.

As a combat engineer, I worked in the minefields in Yugoslavia. I saw a lot of hatred there, nine hundred years of hatred of white people over there. When I came back home to my reserve, I realized that we have our own. We have three bands on one reserve. Two of them are entities because they're still on the table with Parliament Hill and Canada itself. It's a big struggle there. The hatred is very distinct, like what I saw in Yugoslavia. The hatred is very pure. If and when these land claims are straightened out, maybe someday we'll have some peace within my own community.

Life is very hard in our communities, and we are trying to find help for our veterans.

● (1215)

Like I said, the lady suggested to try and get help with Health Canada and Veterans Affairs in the remote communities with RNs and the nurses there. They have Telehealth now. Some of them are obsolete, but people can actually spend an extra dollar on them to help get these psychiatrists to see these younger veterans who are up in these remote communities and don't have any way of getting down. With the finances, and travelling such long distances from the remote communities, it is impossible for them to be reimbursed right away. VAC had reimbursement right away, so when you saw your psychiatrist or psychologist, you took your business card over to Veterans Affairs and they paid you right there. That's one thing that worked here in Saskatchewan.

Now I have to pay out of pocket, and I have to wait a month and a half or two months at a time to receive my money back. When that money comes back, it's returned to the person I borrowed the gas from. That still happens here in Saskatchewan and in rural Saskatchewan, where we have to do such things.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sanderson.

We will flip to our next panel for 10 minutes, and then we're going to come back for questions. Thank you for your testimony.

We'll begin with Ms. Smith.

Ms. Lissa Smith (Vice-President and Minister for Veterans, Métis Nation British Columbia): Thank you.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the ancestors of the unceded territories that we are meeting on today: the Algonquins of Ontario. We thank them for allowing us to be visitors upon their territory to carry out this important work being discussed today.

I'd also like to thank the standing committee for extending an invitation to myself and Director Davoren to be here this afternoon to speak to the needs and issues specific to Métis veterans.

My name is Lissa Smith. I am Métis. My families come from Moose Factory, Ontario, and Red River Settlement in Manitoba, and thus my family journeyed westward. My Métis great-great-grandfather married into the Lytton First Nation. We eventually settled on Vancouver Island. There have been nine generations of my Scottish side of the family born on Vancouver Island. We've been there since the 1860s.

I'm in my third four-year term as an elected official for Métis Nation B.C. I'm presently the provincial vice-president. I've held the portfolio of Métis veterans on the provincial board for 10 years now. I began working with aboriginal veterans in 2002.

I'm honoured to be here today. With me is Tanya Davoren. She's our director for veterans for Métis Nation B.C. She is also a Métis citizen and served seven years in the reserve as an armoured crew person with the British Columbia Dragoons in Vernon, B.C. I'd like to add that she was the first woman in western Canada trained as a tank operator.

We bring regrets from our Métis veteran B.C. committee chairperson, Dave Armitt, who is away on vacation. Chair Armitt was disappointed that he was unable to attend today and be part of this presentation. He wanted to address this important subject on behalf of all Métis veterans in British Columbia. He is on a road trip with many of his colleagues at the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in Edmonton, Alberta.

Chair Armitt did want me to convey to you his deep concern for the many veterans and their families—Métis, first nations, and Inuit right across this country—who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder that has led to taking their own lives. He offers his praise to this committee for undertaking this study on indigenous veterans and for looking for solutions to address veterans' issues such as this.

I've provided a brief background on the Métis people in British Columbia.

The Métis are recognized under section 35 of the Constitution of Canada as one of the three distinct aboriginal peoples. The Métis have been documented in B.C. as early as 1793. Today there are nearly 90,000 self-identified Métis people residing throughout British Columbia, which represents one-third of the aboriginal population in B.C.

Métis Nation B.C. is one of the five governing members that make up the Métis National Council. Métis Nation B.C. is recognized by the provincial and federal governments as the official governing body representing Métis in B.C., including more than 17,500 Métis who have applied for and been granted Métis citizenship.

One of the challenges in building services for Métis people is that the unique history and heritage of Métis people may not necessarily fit into the traditionally held understanding of what it means to be indigenous. As a result, we, as Métis people, have struggled to have our rights and our unique identity recognized.

I'll tag-team with my colleague here. Thank you.

● (1220)

Ms. Tanya Davoren (Director of Health and Sport, Director of Veterans, Métis Nation British Columbia): Thank you, Minister Smith.

To clarify, there were three other ladies on the course, but I was the first to qualify. That does make me the first Cougar tank driver in western Canada.

We're pleased to have the opportunity to share some concerns on the current issues facing Métis veterans in B.C. and to provide some solutions.

There is currently no funding available to Métis veterans for outreach, to seek veterans out. There are no health services, no veteran engagement, and no support for veterans in need or for their families.

There is also no funding for our Métis Veterans B.C. committee, for which Minister Smith is our political representative and Dave Armitt is the chair. It's a 10-person committee made up of veterans from across the province of B.C. The full MVBC committee only meets twice a year. There is no funding for regional meetings, so they can't reach out within their seven regions to work, connect, or make any face-to-face contact with veterans.

Our proposed solution is that MVBC receive funding from Veterans Affairs Canada to carry out the work of the veteran committee, which, as Chair Black from Métis Nation Ontario has said, is to do the face-to-face veteran work and veteran engagement.

We have a second issue to bring forth. We'd like to seek representation at Veterans Affairs Canada on behalf of the Métis veterans of B.C. to identify and resolve the shortcomings that exist, to act in support of Métis veterans, and as a way of secondary engagement after Métis National Council.

We acknowledge that MNBC does have a formalized structure for veterans, as do our colleagues at Métis Nation Ontario. The other governing members of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba could as well, if they were funded. We are lucky to have political leaders who advocate for Métis veterans, to make sure there is an opportunity, at least annually, to come together. As a proposed solution, we're asking for Veterans Affairs Canada to extend an invitation to the Métis Veterans B.C. committee, as well as to Métis Nation Ontario's committee.

Métis Nation B.C. is concerned about the rogue Métis and aboriginal veteran groups that claim to represent all aboriginal veterans across Canada. MNBC does not support Métis Veterans of Canada or the Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and Serving Members Association. Métis Nation B.C. and our MVBC committee enjoy and support a friendly relationship only with the Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones, or AVA, organization.

Our proposed solution, which is in the interest of reconciliation, is that our nation be addressed separately from other aboriginal peoples and that we work with Métis National Council and our five governing members to acknowledge that Métis Nation B.C. and Métis Nation Ontario have their own Métis veterans committees. They can best meet the needs of Métis veterans in their respective provinces if properly resourced to do community outreach for Métis veterans.

We strongly recommend that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial and Métis governments and the Métis National Council, implement and fund a national strategy that supports much-needed provincial Métis veteran engagement and ensures the inclusion of Métis people within the good work of Veterans Affairs Canada.

We recommend that these funds be made available for meaningful collaboration and consultation with Métis veterans and their families at the community level to develop and implement individualized provincial plans. We also recommend that this national strategy include individualized provincial plans for the development and delivery of culturally responsive services for Métis veterans and their families that address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs that arise from past, present, and future service to our great country of Canada.

● (1225)

Ms. Lissa Smith: In closing, we want to thank you for your time and for considering these points as you engage in discussions regarding the needs of indigenous veterans. We have also submitted a brief, which contains more detailed information about Métis Nation B.C. and the governing structure of our Métis Veterans B.C. committee.

In 2010, Métis Nation B.C. enacted a Métis Veterans Act that became part of our governing system. Many questions have come up as to why we wanted them to be part of the governing system. It's so that they're never forgotten and so that the work of our Métis veterans continues over the years to support the veterans of today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll begin with four-minute rounds with Ms. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate hearing from all of you. I am the member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville, a riding in Saskatchewan. I appreciated hearing from you today, sir, in regard to the specific concerns there.

Quite often at this committee we bring up that when people think of rural and remote, they think northern Canada, northern Ontario, or northern B.C. We in Saskatchewan don't seem to get on the charts a lot.

I think it's important to put on the record what I heard from you today, that the truth is that there is as much difficulty for our indigenous veterans in remote and rural areas in Saskatchewan as in those other areas. Would you respond to that very quickly? Is that how you see it?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: The health system in Saskatchewan has a long way to go with our people, with Health Canada and Veterans Affairs. Were we to get together more often with the two of them and with the health clinics across Saskatchewan and in the northern communities, we would be able to help these other veterans up north.

If we can get the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association executives to help them move there, that's why we put them there. We rely on this association for a lot of things.

One of the things we should be pushing forward—and not just looking for money to find another way of having a meeting—is finding out how we can help these younger veterans, these Afghanistan veterans who are stuck in their houses. I was there for a long time. I was in a dark place for years myself with no help, nothing. I want to see these young people get what they deserve.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I appreciate that your concern is beyond yourself. It's for moving forward and making sure we're supplying the support and the care they need, having come home as newer veterans. Thank you for that.

We did travel across the country. We got up to Beauval, Saskatchewan, and then to B.C., Ontario, and Halifax. I find it interesting that the focus is Ontario and British Columbia. They are fairly well organized in comparison to a lot of places. In your requests to VAC, why would you not want to encourage that camaraderie and that association to grow across Saskatchewan as well as other areas?

Ms. Lissa Smith: The western provinces are all part of the Métis National Council. We certainly encourage other provinces.

At this time the provinces are all at different levels. I live in Victoria, B.C. We have the naval base and the air force base on Vancouver Island, so we have a high population of current serving members and young veterans.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: When we met there, we met with your association. Three different Métis associations were represented at our meeting.

● (1230)

Ms. Lissa Smith: Was that in Victoria?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Yes. That's you.

Ms. Lissa Smith: That's interesting. Tanya did describe.... I think three of our committee members might have been there.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: No, there was a sense in the room of not necessarily everybody representing everyone. This was where we struggled.

Ms. Lissa Smith: I don't know who the other two would have been.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: That's fine.

The Legion was represented there as well. I can't remember the specifics, but he talked about how the Legion across Canada did not serve indigenous people when they came back from the war, and that they are not funded by the government to do the work they do. There was an impression in the room that they did receive funding.

Ms. Lissa Smith: I can only speak to what I know, that Ontario and British Columbia—the "bookends", as we call them—have done the most work for the Métis National Council on our veterans' committees. The other provinces will be coming on board with work, and we hope they copy everything we have, all the documentation, policies, and procedures. That would be a given.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay.

Ms. Lissa Smith: We are the Métis Nation B.C., recognized by the provincial government as well and the federal government in British Columbia.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay.

Ms. Lissa Smith: We support all Métis people and we are the recognized nation.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you. I appreciate your putting that on the record.

The Chair: Mr. Samson, you have four minutes.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Thank you very much, all three of you—for serving, number one, and also for your testimony here today.

As you can tell, the time is so short that we've got to try zero in quickly, but some of the issues seem very similar. In B.C. we heard that part of the solution was what you shared today, funding for networking. That was one, as well as representation of Métis in Veterans Affairs. Then there are the issues of dealing with your groups, if you want, or the three different indigenous veterans groups, the others being of course Inuit and first nations.

As a minority francophone, the words that we would use are "par et pour", which means "by us, for us". It means to let us on the ground who understand the challenges do the work. That was very interesting and important. I'll hold that note.

I want to talk with Mr. Sanderson a little bit more on a couple of issues that are extremely important. Throughout our travels, it was evident that when people from reserves came back from World War II or Korea or afterwards, Afghanistan and whatnot, we were not really equipped to help those veterans. What could we do at the reserve stage? What can we do as far as services on the reserve by Veterans Affairs are concerned?

I'll stop there, but if I have time, the next question would be about services, which you talked about. We've added a lot of services in education and compassionate care. Are you aware of those? That's the other piece about awareness.

I'll let you start, and if we have time I'll zero in a little more.

Those are three questions.

Go ahead; sorry.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: My struggle with Veterans Affairs has always been about services. It's very hard, not doing business with the communities, to get anything from Veterans Affairs. In the past, I've told them that they couldn't come to my home anymore because of what they've done to me. It really hit home for me that none of our people would actually get help from Veterans Affairs at all because of the stigma that we have had given from Canada itself.

If we want to fight through the stigma, we've got to work together and find a common ground. That common ground has to start somewhere. I would suggest in the health field or the health clinics.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Health clinics are very important, and thank you.

Do you use your VAC account? Do you know about a VAC account?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: I know about the VAC account, but I don't have a computer at home.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Okay.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: That's one of the things I struggle with right now. We only have one income. I'm trying to get on an earnings loss benefit, but that's just a wait-and-see too. I've heard of horror stories on that program as well.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Okay.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Like I said, the office just opened as well, and we just have to wait and see how things are going.

● (1235)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Push and ask the questions.

Are you aware of the compassionate care program or the educational assistance? If you've been in the military for six years, you get $40,000 access funding for education, or at 12 years, it's $80,000. Are you aware of that?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: No, I wasn't part of that back in 1996 when I discharged from the military. I was left out in the cold. I was just let go. It was, "Thanks for your services. Thanks for coming out."

Mr. Darrell Samson: In your VAC—

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Transition was not there at the time.

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you, all, for your service. It's great to see people from Vancouver Island and British Columbia here as well.

Mr. Sanderson, you talked about health clinics and the need for more. There was a recommendation that came from the advisory committee, the minister's mental health advisory group, for an in-patient care centre for PTSD. Do you see something like that benefiting indigenous veterans, or would something culturally appropriate be a benefit in health services? We do live in a big country and a lot of services are remote, but do you think a facility like that would benefit veterans?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: I believe so, because we're in a day and age full of electronics, and my people are learning more about the world than I did. When I first joined up, I was naive about the world. We had only two channels, and they weren't of much interest to me. All I wanted to do was get outside and be a part of something bigger, and I did. When I came back, I was full of false hope. There was no veterans' transition. There was nothing in place for anybody when they got out. Offices finally opened up, after we lost 160, 164 men and women to suicide—men and women who had served this country.

The new Veterans Charter has a lot of holes in it that do not benefit the veterans. The old charter had a lot going for it, but the Liberal government back in the nineties decided to change it with the new Veterans Charter. Then when the Liberals left, the Conservatives moved in and implemented it. They pushed it forward while we were at war.

Now the war is over, and these men are damaged and broken, just like me. It took me 20-plus years to start talking again. The reason I did was that Veterans Affairs was harassing me and attacking me and my family. I had one front-line worker attack my wife, saying that they were going to cut off services because they couldn't contact me. Where is the professionalism in that?

Mr. Gord Johns: I really appreciate your testimony, Mr. Sanderson. It's very powerful, and I'm glad you're talking. I'm glad you're here right now sharing your thoughts with us.

There's one thing I've been wondering about, and maybe I'll go to both panels on this. In the United States, 30% of caseworkers are former veterans. They have veterans who understand veterans' issues working with veterans. Would something like that help veterans in Canada, if we could get to that threshold? Also, would you see a benefit if there were indigenous veterans who could be caseworkers or work for VAC and would understand the culturally appropriate supports that you need?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Oh, yes, definitely.

Mr. Gord Johns: Great. Excellent.

What about you, Ms. Smith or Ms. Davoren?

Ms. Lissa Smith: Yes, absolutely. That would be a huge benefit for cultural purposes and for mental health. I was thinking about the health authorities throughout the province of B.C. and how they're all working on their cultural safety plans and their aboriginal health plans and things like that, so it definitely needs to be addressed in an aboriginal context.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Sanderson, did you want to add to that?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: No. It's straightforward.

Mr. Gord Johns: Okay.

You talked about getting resources for things that you need—outreach, regional meetings. Is there anything that you would prioritize, Ms. Davoren and Ms. Smith?

Ms. Tanya Davoren: Travel is definitely one. Our regions are large. Just as Ontario's a large province, B.C.'s a very large province as well, and there are a lot of remote areas. Travel is a huge component in reaching out to our veterans and getting into those smaller communities.

Mr. Gord Johns: Yes, Mr. Sanderson identified that too. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Bratina is next.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sanderson, I'm concerned by your testimony, and we're listening intently, believe me.

I don't know if you remember the name "Ron Lancaster". He was a quarterback for the Roughriders, and he was the manager of the Tiger-Cats. We had many conversations. One of the things he said about the young players coming in was that they should start thinking about their futures right away.

Do you see any benefit for young recruits having some sort of consultation opportunity throughout their careers and as they approach...? Everybody's going to be a veteran at some point. Were you completely out of the loop in terms of what the next step would be when you were doing your service? Would there be some help in a discussion with somebody who would say, "You have to look at this, and you have to look at that"?

● (1240)

Mr. Victor Sanderson: My time in was supposed to be 30 years. I wanted to be a lifer. That was my calling. That's what I wanted. That's why I fell down and felt disgusted and humiliated and hurt, because I lost my career.

What was the question again?

Mr. Bob Bratina: With young recruits, they don't get any advice on the next step after service.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: When I was a sapper private when I first got in, the older guys always talked about the end of life. That's pretty much what they talked about, their career. They suggested to us to start thinking about what we should be doing early on, and what they didn't do.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Right.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: It was always a lesson learned from the older to the younger guys in the combat engineer trade. Like I said, we're family. We're a breed apart from other combat arms trades or other trade groups in the Canadian Armed Forces. They always tried their best to do things for us, to keep our eyes open and see the big picture.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Right.

Mr. Victor Sanderson: When we had someone who didn't look out for himself, we understood and we left them alone.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Tanya, in your career, it must have been interesting sometimes for you to appear out of your Cougar. Would somebody look at you and say, what are you doing here?

Ms. Tanya Davoren: That's correct.

Certainly playing with the boys, so to speak.... I served from 1990 to 1997. When I was pregnant with my first child, I decided, "Well, this was a lot of fun, but I'm done."

I want to bring up something. Our earlier witness, Randi, mentioned toiletries out in the field. I ended up being diagnosed in 1995 with toxic shock syndrome because there was no opportunity in the middle of Wainwright, Alberta, to take care of what I needed to take care of at the time. It is a very real concern for serving females, for sure.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time. It was camaraderie. It is family, I agree. I was a reservist, but not fully in, doing my nursing at the same time. If I'd been intelligent, I would have done it through the army, but instead I chose a student loan.

I definitely enjoyed my time. It was different being a female amongst mainly men, especially because I was not in an administration or medical unit; I was in an armoured unit.

The Chair: Mr. Eyolfson is next.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: First of all, I thank all of you for your testimony.

Mr. Sanderson, I have a question for you. Obviously, what you're describing is very difficult. I know I would certainly have a difficult time relating the things that you're telling us.

Can we be of any help to you personally right now? Is there anything we can do for you that would help you?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: In what way?

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: That's what I'm asking you. Do you feel you need help right now?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Yes.

I need help with the earnings loss benefit application that I'm filling out—the paperwork and everything else that goes with it. I have a case manager here in Saskatoon, finally, and we're getting things on board, but to push that paperwork through takes time. Native veterans don't have time. We've been waiting forever and we're tired of waiting.

You need to fast-track us. We've always been segregated in this country. If you want to desegregate us, fast-track our claims. Our claims have been held up in Saskatchewan and wherever else we have to send them. They take a long time. They take forever, and money is a very tight issue when you have to travel a long distance to see your psychiatrist or your psychologist or any other provider that you need for your condition.

Now, I understand that Veterans Affairs has all the conditions compounded into categories, and it's very hard to actually attach one to another, because they're all separate. Each injury is a separate entity. For example, PTSD and chronic back pain are different, but there's always that vicious cycle of the chronic pain overtaking my mind and causing a lot of havoc in there, and PTSD just kicks in and from no problem at all, all of a sudden I'm in my garage for a week and half or two weeks, without my family around and not wanting to be around them.

I have no support for my wife and family, as there's nothing here for them, or in any place across Canada, for that matter. I've heard testimony about wives attacking the ministers in Ottawa, trying to seek help.

Now, those are really hard things for them to do, and it is humiliating to actually come towards this committee and to find ways, loopholes, and red tape to get through. The red tape is one of the hardest things we have to deal with as veterans. If you do away with that and fast-track everybody....

We're not asking for a lot, like the Prime Minister says. We're not. We want our quality of life back. We want to be able to breathe the air without having a flashback, but that's nearly impossible, because it always happens. I still see minefields in my yard from time to time.

I talk about that with my psychiatrist. She asks me how it is today and if I feel like killing anybody. Yes, I do, on a daily basis. It's not easy to get out of. PTSD is with us for life. You guys only have to be here for four years, but we are veterans forever. We try to humble ourselves and try to help our younger people move forward in a way that we see but that they don't see.

All I can do is observe and walk around. I do not have any sports or anything else to help me fight these things, because my conditions are so great.

● (1245)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kitchen, you have four minutes.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for being here today and for your service.

Tanya, I'm extremely impressed, because my father was a Dragoon. He was the CO of the Royal Canadian Dragoons. I spent many years as a youngster running around tanks, and around the Lynxes and the Cougars. I always wished I could pop my head out of the top of that turret someday.

Anyway, Mr. Sanderson, I too come from Saskatchewan. I live in Estevan. You've talked a bit and we've heard many times about how our veterans, at least in our area, will travel anywhere to get health care. They will go as far as they need to go, because those services aren't available to them in Saskatchewan. There are no clinics, etc.

We've also heard from them on the issue of reimbursement. You were saying it would be a huge benefit—not only in Saskatchewan, but also in other parts of the country where people have to do this travel—if once they got there, they could apply right then and there to VAC, such that they would get reimbursed immediately. Is that correct?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Yes. That's how it was in the beginning.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Yes, so that would be a good thing, and you might suggest that we recommend something along those lines, correct?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Yes, correct, because it takes money out of my pocket and it takes food off my table.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Right.

Telemedicine oftentimes is something we look at today, but in rural parts of Canada there isn't that ability to do telemedicine.

We heard throughout the week when we travelled as well as through committee meetings about other issues dealing with non-approved-support types of treatments, such as powwows, elders, or sweat lodges. We heard from an individual about a sweat lodge for someone who was on a ship and who was acting up. The indication was that rather than discharging them, they sent them home to talk to their elders. Immediately after doing that, the person went back and became a productive member of the forces for another almost 20 years. I'm wondering if the three of you could comment on that.

● (1250)

Mr. Victor Sanderson: I'll go first.

Our spirituality is our life. When we fall apart, when we fall down from being away from home and being situated in another diverse ethnic group such as white people, we spend so much time with you that sometimes our spirit will tell us we're having a hard time, so we have to go home. What that person did on the ship was the right thing to do, because it set him straight.

We listen to our elders and the Creator through our ceremonies. Our ceremonies are great for us. They help us and they benefit us, but they also tell us that we have a long way to go, that nothing is just taken care of right away. The medicines we use are from the land. The way we get them, we have to be so humble and free of all alcohol and drugs. For a veteran it's very hard to let go, because the PTSD could be so severe that those are what they need to help move on with life, so we go to you guys and try to go your way.

Then we come back to our way of life later on so that we can actually move forward again as human beings. That's who we are in this life. We are human beings, and we have tried our best to be humble, but with racism and everything else and the atrocities against our people, it's very hard to actually look back and to try to bring that forward.

Without an apology from the Canadian Armed Forces for what they've done to our people as veterans, for the sacrifices that they have made, and for the ones who died overseas and are buried there, we still have time to remember them and bring them forward. Only Veterans Affairs can actually do this. We can't, because you're the ones who did this to us. If you need help, we will give it to you, but you're the ones who actually have to do this public apology to our people. It would benefit us all in the long run because our people would want to be warriors again. We did have a lot of warriors before contact.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fraser, we'll end with you for four minutes.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all three of you for joining us today and for your thoughtful presentations.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Smith and Ms. Davoren. You talked a little bit about outreach. Obviously, with British Columbia being a large province, it takes a lot of effort in order to reach out to all of your members and to indigenous veterans. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about what Veterans Affairs Canada could do in order to support outreach work that either your group or other organizations are doing in a large province to get to those more remote communities.

I know we've talked a little bit about technology and how that could assist, but I think that sometimes having peer support on the ground to actually do that outreach is important to bring people in to understand what Veterans Affairs may be able to do to support them. I worry that sometimes the benefits and services are not necessarily known about by all of the veterans who could be accessing those services that could help them. What outreach work do you do and what could Veterans Affairs Canada do to support you?

Ms. Lissa Smith: One of the positions on our veterans committee is a service officer, and it's their job to navigate the systems for people who need assistance. I believe that one of our former service officers helped Métis veterans get $2.5 million in services that they weren't aware they were entitled to.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Right.

Ms. Lissa Smith: We have 38 chartered Métis communities throughout British Columbia, in seven regions. We do have a veteran representative for each region, but accessing the Métis chartered communities and finding out where the veterans are and who the veterans are would be of huge benefit to identifying Métis veterans.

We currently don't have any resources to do that work or to even help identify the Métis veterans in British Columbia, and that's important data we need so we can advocate more for specific Métis veterans services.

I'll let Tanya add anything. Thank you.

● (1255)

Mr. Colin Fraser: Sure.

Ms. Tanya Davoren: If I may, as to services that are currently available, the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line is for first nations and Inuit people in crisis or distress. It is not for Métis people to call, so even having a line available for Métis people to access in crisis.... I did call the number to see what would happen, and they said they would try to assist me but I was not their intended audience.

When we think about technology and how it benefits Métis people trying to connect with one another, it's super-important to look at other ways. If Veterans Affairs Canada helped us prepare and work with our service officer and create more programs like that, I think we really could be providing the best service to Métis veterans in the province.

Mr. Colin Fraser: You talked in your presentation about wanting an invitation from Veterans Affairs Canada to have representation. I wasn't clear what you meant by that. What would the invitation be for, and what representation would you be thinking about?

Ms. Tanya Davoren: I think that would be on working with committees, or on accessing services in a better way. We have a Métis National Council that represents us at the provincial level, but if there are committees that do this work and look at the service officer pieces provincially and how we could become more involved, we'd love to have that communication.

It was mentioned earlier that we're last on the "know list", so we show up maybe a day late sometimes. Just being more aware of what's happening is very important, and this is a huge miss right now. We need to get that communication happening.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Black, I think, touched on that very well on the previous panel, on making sure that there is better communication and that the information gets out there in a timely way. I think that is very important.

Mr. Sanderson, would you agree that it would be helpful to have better communication between Veterans Affairs Canada and people actually on the ground serving veterans in Métis communities?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: I think it would be helpful. The civilian workers in there are not compassionate, and they're very hard to deal with because they're bureaucrats. Having somebody there who is compassionate and knows that a veteran is suffering, who can see it, would be beneficial for us. Having 30% of our own people in there as well, as a veteran.... Even in remote areas, for our older veterans, we need our own people in there in Veterans Affairs as front-line workers to help with the language barriers.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Would you see the newly reopened Veterans Affairs office in Saskatoon as an opportunity for your area to have that type of engagement?

Mr. Victor Sanderson: Well, yes, we'll see how that goes from here, because it just opened and I just got a counsellor. My last one was from 2009, so it's been a big gap to fill.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Right. Okay, thanks very much.

The Chair: That is our time today for testimony.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank all three of you for taking time out of your schedules today to testify. The testimony was great, and hopefully it will help us in our journey to the end of this study.

Mr. Eyolfson, do you want to...?

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like to present a notice of motion. I'll distribute this.

The motion is:

> That the Committee undertake a study of the challenges faced by homeless veterans, the causes that lead to their homelessness and Veterans Affairs Canada's efforts to address this issue; that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than December 2018; and that the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to the report.

The Chair: Is there discussion on the motion?

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: I tabled it.

The Chair: You tabled it, so you're going to bring that back at the next meeting, then? Okay, great.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: Wait, I'm sorry; what?

The Chair: It's not a notice. You presented it two days before.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: This was presented two days before.

The Chair: Then it's not a notice. Okay, so we could have discussion on the motion, then. Sorry. Thank you.

Go ahead, Cathay.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, I have other appointments right now and we're at the end of the committee meeting, so I would suggest that we need to move on this the next time we meet.

The Chair: Can we have a meeting this Tuesday and get this done so we can move into the summer on this? When is our next meeting scheduled?

Tuesday we could do one. Yes, we can do one on Tuesday, then, so we'll meet here on Tuesday at 11:00 for a regular meeting.

Thank you.

This meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: http://www.ourcommons.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : http://www.noscommunes.ca